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SUBJECT: IIASA Council Selects New Deputy Director and Chairman

SUMMARY

¶1. The IIASA Council held its annual meeting on November 17-18 in Laxenburg, where it made some personnel decisions triggered by the selection of American Detlof von Winterfeldt as IIASA's ninth director, effective January 1, 2009. The Council, which consists of representatives of the 18 National Member Organizations (NMOs), was briefed on the status of the scientific staff, research highlights, the Young Scientists Summer Program (YSSP), and membership and financial issues. End Summary.

New Leadership

¶2. The selection of Detlof von Winterfeldt - a German-born American professor of public policy and management at University of Southern California - to the Directorship, required Prof. Simon Levin to step down as Chairman of the IIASA Council, because IIASA, by tradition, does not have a director and chairman from the same country. In a closed-door session, the Council selected Peter Lemke of Germany to take over the chair of the IIASA Council effective January 1. The Council also nominated Acting Deputy Director Nebojsa Nakicenovic to be Deputy Director. Current Acting Director Sten Nilsson was elected Honorary Scholar in recognition of his years of contributions to the Institute, as were retiring Council members from Finland, the Netherlands, and Russia.

Scientific Staff and
Research Highlights

¶3. Acting Director Sten Nilsson reported that the scientific staff of IIASA has stabilized at approximately 1,100 person-months after several years of growth. The Egyptian NMO representative lamented that there were no Egyptian scientists on the staff, and the acting director indicated that the Directorate was aware of the issue, but that to date no qualified Egyptian scientists had applied to join the staff. The same applied to Estonia.

¶4. The top research priorities, by projected 2008 funding, are:

-- Atmospheric Pollution and Economic Development (EUR 915,000)

-- Evolution and Ecology (EUR 829,000)
-- Global Energy Assessment (EUR 645,000)
-- Risk and Vulnerability (EUR 566,000)
-- Forestry (EUR 440,000)
-- Land Use Change and Agriculture (EUR 380,000)

IIASA's projected research budget for 2008 is just over EUR 7.2 million, which includes EUR 2.7 million in partner funds remitted by IIASA to the European Commission. The research budget in 2007 was EUR 5.7 million, and the majority of the EUR 1.5 million increase is accounted for by an additional EUR 925,000 in partner funds from the EC for forestry projects and a four-fold increase in the budget for the Global Energy Assessment, a major research undertaking that will feed into the next round of global climate change projections and global energy policies.

Strategic Planning Process

¶15. IIASA is beginning a strategic planning process that will focus on the long-term structure of priorities of IIASA. This process will accelerate in May, when the Council meets again. There was a long discussion on how the Young Scientist Summer Program (YSSP) might be adjusted to accommodate concerns of greater national representation. Some suggestions included soliciting corporate sponsorship to help with the costs of scientists from poorer countries, increasing the allocation of slots to new NMOs, and making the timing of the program more flexible, particularly for scientists from the southern hemisphere, whose participation in the June-August program conflicts with the requirements of their academic calendar. The South African representative suggested starting a January program for southern hemisphere scientists, and/or instituting regional YSSP programs.

No New Members
in Sight

¶16. Acting Director Nilsson provided a summary of IIASA efforts to attract new member organizations, which he admitted were not bearing fruit. The priority for many years has been to win the return of the U.K., France, and Canada, founding members that left the organization. Nilsson said little progress had been made, although a visiting lecture by U.K. Chief Scientist John Beddington on 28 November might perhaps open the door to more talks with the British.

¶17. Efforts to broaden the geographic scope of IIASA's membership were similarly dim, although the best prospect was perhaps Chile, with whom IIASA has had interactions with the Conference on Integrated Science and the Center for Mathematical Modeling. IIASA had discussions with Brazil and Mexico, but suffered from IIASA's relative obscurity in the region. Much work was needed in the area of awareness-raising. IIASA is meeting with Turkey's Scientific and Technological Research Council early next year, hosted a surprise visit by Romanian officials this year, and had had a dialogue with Nigeria.

Assessments Increased,
Two Countries in Arrears

¶18. Kurt Komarek, the Austrian NMO representative and chairperson of the financial committee, reported that an 8 percent increase in contributions had been assessed for 2008, bringing the total contribution to EUR 8.742 million. Every country except Japan and Germany had increased their payment. Estonia and Ukraine were behind in their contributions, and the Council passed decisions that could ultimately lead to their relegation to observer status - in Estonia's case as soon as early 2009. The U.S. National Science Foundation transferred the U.S. assessment of EUR 1.944 million just days before the Council meeting. The U.S. is the only "Category A" contributor; the eight "Category C" contributors (EUR 648,000) are Austria, Finland, Germany, Japan, Netherlands, Norway, Russia, and Sweden. China contributes EUR 324,000 and the remaining eight

members (Egypt, Estonia, India, Republic of Korea, Pakistan, Poland, South Africa, and Ukraine) are assessed less than EUR 150,000 per year.

Next Meetings and
Conference

¶9. The next regular Council meeting will take place in June 2009, and will be followed the next day by a conference aimed at engaging NMO Committee members in the research planning process. The full U.S. NMO Committee plans to attend the June meeting. The Council also decided to have a special one-day meeting in March 2009, in conjunction with the IIASA Science Advisory Committee, to take part in the development of the strategic vision on which the research plan for 2011-2015 will be based. In addition, the Council has scheduled the next IIASA Conference for May 31-June 2, 2010, with the theme Science and Global Change. The last conference in November 2007, marking IIASA's 35th anniversary, attracted the participation of Jeffrey Sachs and Thomas Schelling, among other distinguished guest lecturers, and was a huge success.

COMMENT

¶10. IIASA is potentially entering a golden age, as its primary research focus on climate change and the environment is at the center of the global policy debate. An underlying theme of the meetings was the tension between the political and scientific missions of the organization. IIASA was established in 1973 with a mission to bridge ideological and political differences through joint scientific endeavor. The end of the cold war and the emergence of climate change on the global agenda have shifted the emphasis toward science. We will continue to promote the political mission -- the recent membership of India and Pakistan was a positive development -- by urging IIASA to broaden the participation of scientists from around the world. We encourage, in particular, the Council's efforts to explore innovative approaches beyond the traditional national member organization (NMO) model, which effectively precludes the participation of otherwise qualified scientists who happen to come from countries with immature scientific communities.

¶11. We also welcome the Council's efforts to give the Institute a more solid financial footing by increasing the endowment fund and exploring new sources of funding, such as corporate endowments, with the caveat that the independence and scientific integrity of the Institute be preserved. By shoring up its finances and broadening participation, IIASA can better fulfill its mission to provide interdisciplinary scientific studies that influence global policy.
End comment.

SCHULTE